



PUBLIC CONVERSATIONS & PUBLIC SOLUTIONS: MAKING HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE BETTER IN MINNESOTA



Engagement Results
August, 2012

“Few things have a bigger impact on or are more personal to Minnesotans than health and our health care system.”



August 6, 2012

Minnesota Health Care Reform Task Force
540 Cedar Street
St Paul, MN 55155

Dear Task Force members:

Few things have a bigger impact on, or are more personal to, Minnesotans than health. We applaud the bipartisan Health Care Reform Task Force for recognizing this important fact and for soliciting our help gathering citizen perspectives that build upon the work of past citizen engagement efforts of Sen. Durenberger and others.

Working with a diverse coalition of partners over four months, Citizen Solutions engaged Minnesotans in a different conversation about health care grounded in personal experiences and consensus building. Through expansive outreach and thoughtful interactive meetings, we heard directly from Minnesotans about their values and priorities for health and the health care system they experience day in and day out.

Not surprisingly, the Minnesotans who participated in this process took their work very seriously. In metro, suburban and greater Minnesota communities, we heard in-depth thoughts and ideas on access and affordability; the challenges to maintaining good health; and the shared rights and responsibilities underpin the health care system.

From Moorhead to Rochester, we heard detailed guidance on what Minnesotans see as critical components for improving health and the health care system—guidance reflected in the principles for action contained in the pages that follow. These Minnesotans also made clear that preconceived notions about the public’s perceptions of health, their understanding of the health care system, and their opinions of the challenges facing that system are not necessarily true—a finding that we will further test through a scientific public opinion poll in the coming months.

Citizen Solutions attendees voiced a resounding desire to see their input help improve health and the health care system in Minnesota. We hope that the perspectives and principles for action contained within this report will serve as one of the measures by which the task force’s legislative recommendations are considered. We also hope it will be used to stimulate further community conversations on health in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Scott Cooper'.

C. Scott Cooper
Bush Foundation

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sean Kershaw'.

Sean Kershaw
Citizens League



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All photography came from Citizen Solutions meetings in Wilmar, Stillwater, Eden Prairie, Bemidji, and the Lao Family organization in St. Paul.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Minnesotans have strongly-held beliefs related to health and health care, and a sophisticated understanding of what it takes to live healthy lives.



Citizen Solutions participants conveyed these beliefs and understandings in a series of conversations that focused on the underlying values of health, health care and health coverage. They believe that health is not solely defined or controlled by the health care system but is also significantly impacted by where one lives, the resources one has access to and overall community norms.

Participants in the Citizen Solutions process from all regions of Minnesota and all political, social and ethnic backgrounds have a deep appreciation of the shared responsibilities and trade-offs that must occur within all levels of the health care system—from patient to insurer to policymaker—to make that system work as effectively and as efficiently as

possible. These citizen perceptions reach far beyond the “triple aim” of better care, better health and lower costs that has guided the work of the bipartisan Minnesota Health Care Reform Task Force to date.

These and other findings are the result of a concerted effort to involve Minnesotans in a different conversation about health care—a conversation that moved away from argument and instead focused on personal experiences and common ground. From April through July 2012, Citizen Solutions engaged rural, suburban and metropolitan residents from all political persuasions, income levels and ethnic backgrounds in a discussion on how to make Minnesotans healthier and our healthcare system work better.



Citizen Solutions received direct input from nearly 1,100 Minnesotans in a series of more than 40 community, employer and constituent meetings across the state. The in-person conversations were bolstered by interactive, facilitated online discussions on topics ranging from affordability to prevention.

From those conversations and interactions came three principles for action intended to help guide future health and health care policies in Minnesota, including proposals of the task force. Those action steps are:

Empower Minnesotans to be co-creators and co-managers of their health. That empowerment should include a balance of rights and responsibilities.

Equip Minnesotans to make healthy choices within the health care system. Currently, barriers within that system include access, affordability, non-personalized care and a culture of treatment, rather than proactive management for health and wellness. However, Minnesotans don't expect unfettered access to health care.

Encourage the redesign of institutions and creation of environments that help reinforce healthy daily choices. The cornerstone of that effort should be based upon access, affordability and better, more accurate information.

Minnesotans want their health care system to work as effectively and efficiently as possible, they want opportunities to live healthier lives and they want to be part of the solution that will make it possible.

A common refrain at the meetings and in the online engagement was that Citizen Solutions participants expect their thoughts and opinions on health care to be heard, and they want to be made part of the process to reform that system. That commitment was made evident by the large percentage of individuals who participated in the Citizen Solutions process who asked that they be kept informed of the progress of health care reform in the state and the work of the task force.



OUR PROCESS



GROUNDING CONVERSATIONS IN DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

Citizen Solutions offered participants a unique conversation experience in large part because of the diversity of perspectives brought to the table. In partnership with a coalition that includes the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, Take Action Minnesota, Citizens League, InCommons and others, each event recruited participants of a variety of ages, political persuasions and health care experiences to add richness and depth to the dialogues. The Health Care Reform Task Force also publicized each citizen engagement meeting through its list serve, and a multitude of partner organizations and newspapers helped generate awareness of the events.

ENGAGING MINNESOTANS WHERE THEY LIVE, WORK AND GATHER

Citizen Solutions convened citizens where they live, work and gather through a series of conversation-focused events. In addition to community meetings,

organizers designed constituency-based forums to collect unique health insights from specific groups including employers, the homeless, communities of color and other groups with unique health care interests and experiences.

THOUGHTFUL CONVERSATIONS ELICIT CITIZENS' VALUES AND PRIORITIES

At each event, attendees participated in a series of round-table discussions related to their underlying values and priorities for health and health care. In-depth conversations elicited thoughtful input on health, existing health care challenges, controlling health care costs and creating changes in health care. These conversations were rounded out by using an onsite polling system to collect individual perceptions and opinions, and a table exercise that asked participants to negotiate and reach consensus amongst themselves about the rights and responsibilities that citizens should expect within the health care system.



CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT CITIZEN OBJECTIVES FOR HEALTH

**THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM’S OBJECTIVES:
A TRIPLE AIM**

For years, health care professionals and the U. S. health care system have worked in pursuit of a so-called “triple aim”:

Better Health – Better Care – Lower Cost

This “triple aim” has anchored the work and discussions of the Minnesota Health Care Reform Task Force. But that’s not how Citizen Solutions participants think about health.

**THE CITIZENS’ OBJECTIVES:
A BROADER VIEW OF HEALTH**

Citizen Solutions participants shared a view of health that goes far beyond the “triple aim” advanced by health care professionals and the health system. Rather, participants agreed that a “healthy” life is a life balanced between mind, body and spirit. Many participants spoke of the pursuit of health as a push-and-pull between the immediate demands of work, family or other pressures and the desire to choose healthy options in daily life. For others, health is a lifelong journey, even though levels of healthy activity and energy change with age.

“ I want a health care provider to value me, as a whole person. ”

- St. Paul participant

“ Health is being able to do what you want to do when you want to do it. ”

- St. Cloud participant

“ Being healthy is finding a balance – mental, physical, and spiritual.

What contributes to a longer life is what we do each day. ”

- Inver Grove Heights participant

But, above all, participants agreed that the health care system’s “triple aim” does not go far enough. Instead, these citizens would recommend the following elements for health:

Full Participation of Individuals. Citizen Solutions participants recognize that health must be a joint effort. They want to engage and manage their own health with complete and accessible information and opportunities to participate in health care decision-making and healthier lifestyles.

Success Within the Health Care System.

Citizen Solutions participants respect the health care system’s “triple aim” objectives as essential, but also insufficient, to truly achieve health.

Support for a Culture of Health. Finally, Citizen Solutions participants noted the cultural pressures that often work against individuals striving to be healthy. Busy work schedules, the price differences between fast food and many healthier choices, the lack of access to good foods and opportunities to stay physically active, and momentum against health that is difficult to combat in day-to-day life.

PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION



Achieving a healthier Minnesota is a lofty goal,

packed full of underlying rights and responsibilities for both citizens who aim to be healthy and the health care system that exists to support their health and wellness. Citizen Solutions participants voiced a strong desire to play an active role in assuming responsibility for their own health – and health as they define it: achieving and sustaining wellness, rather than only focusing on the absence of disease.



However, with this desire for increased responsibility and partnership with the health care system comes an expectation that our system will make a concerted effort to provide citizens with the tools and resources to succeed. The pages that follow offer Principles for Action for the Minnesota Health Care Reform Task Force, Governor Dayton and legislators to consider as they evaluate efforts to improve health and reform future health care policies.



PRINCIPLE FOR ACTION:

Empower Citizens to be Co-Creators and Co-Managers of their Health.

Citizen Solutions participants want to take an active role in co-managing their health. They understand that empowerment comes with both rights and responsibilities and are willing to make trade-offs to achieve better health.

CITIZENS ARE WILLING TO MAKE TRADE-OFFS

Citizen Solutions participants want to be co-creators and co-managers in their health. This goal stood out most clearly in an exercise presented at each event. Seated at tables with between four and eight attendees each, participants were asked to allocate a set number of poker chips across a list of health care rights and responsibilities (full list available in

Appendix A) and reach consensus as a group as to which of those rights and responsibilities would be prioritized. Across all events, participants reached the greatest consensus on two points:

1. Citizens “have the right to expect affordable care.”
2. Citizens are “responsible for practicing healthy behaviors.”

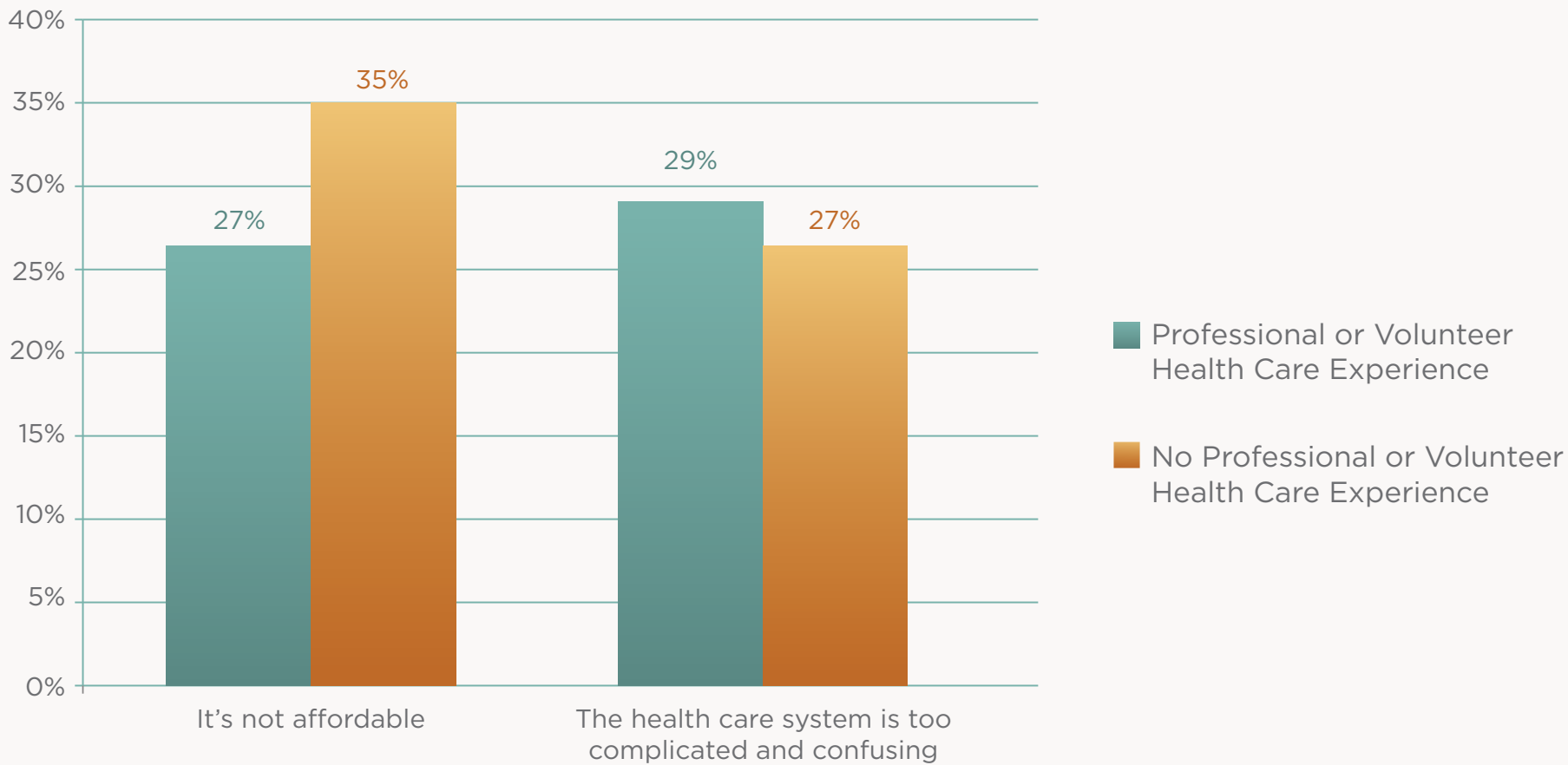
Participants were not asked to balance rights and responsibilities; they were only asked to prioritize among a list of both. Participants chose a nearly equal balance of rights and responsibilities regardless of age, political perspective or experience with the health care system.

**INFORMATION IS CRITICAL TO
CO-CREATION AND CO-MANAGEMENT**

For Citizen Solutions participants, becoming co-creators and co-managers in health must begin with transparent and accessible information. In discussions across the state, participants voiced a desire to take a more active role in their relationships with providers, insurers and the health care system at large, but often they expressed that they feel almost helpless in knowing where to start. In fact, when asked to identify the biggest challenge facing our health care system today, “the health care system is too complicated and confusing” was the second most popular response. Interestingly, among those participants who had experience working in or with the health care system, health care’s complexity is the single greatest challenge facing the system today.

“It’s so complex to get what you need in health care. And if you don’t ask the right questions, you won’t get it and who knows what the right questions are? It’s not a very friendly system.”
– St. Cloud participant

**PARTICIPANTS WITH PROFESSIONAL OR VOLUNTEER HEALTH CARE EXPERIENCE MOST
OFTEN IDENTIFIED THE COMPLEXITY OF THE SYSTEM AS THE BIGGEST BARRIER**



Participants were provided a list of ten challenges in health. They were asked to identify the top two challenges for health care in Minnesota. The number one challenge was affordability, however participants with professional or volunteer experience within the health care system believed complexity of the system was the greatest challenge.

“I work in health care. I find myself fairly well educated and even I can’t work out exactly how health care works.”
– Rochester participant

A MORE TRANSPARENT SYSTEM

For Citizen Solutions participants, achieving the transparency needed to empower co-creation and co-management could come in many forms:

Clear Information from the Health System.

From insurance “statements of benefits” to information about available choices when selecting health care procedures, participants want more and clearer information about their health care and health insurance benefits so that they can make more informed choices.

Public Education to Support Healthy Choices.

Participants believe that education about healthy behaviors and choices—from the value of diet and exercise to the importance of vaccines and other prevention efforts—is necessary to be co-creators and co-managers of health.

“ There can be information, but if it’s not accessible or readily understood, what difference does it make? ”

- employer meeting participant

“ Would you spend three times more the amount for an MRI if you knew you could drive a few blocks and get the same MRI for much less? If we have tools and the motivation to manage costs we would spend less on our medical products and services. ”

- online participant

“ We are told what we should do to fix a medical problem but we don’t know how much it costs before we go get it fixed. We don’t know who is paying what portion or how much I need to cover myself. I’m not sure anyone knows until after a procedure is done – and that doesn’t seem like a good thing. ”

- Rochester participant

**RESPECTFULNESS AND CULTURAL
COMPETENCY IS NECESSARY
FOR CO-CREATION AND
CO-MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH**

Participants in constituency-specific meetings (which included Latino, African-American, Hmong and Somali groups, as well as two homeless groups) consistently voiced a need for co-creation and co-management of health – but to an even greater degree they stressed the need that cultural competency and respectfulness is necessary to make this possible.

For example, several Latino participants said that affordability barriers lead them to visit a doctor only when they absolutely must, but when they receive care, they feel their medical issues are often dismissed. Another example resulted from a well-publicized account of differential treatment between whites and blacks, many in the black community tend to be suspicious of recommended treatments. A final example came from one homeless participant who expressed frustration with being told she should

seek preventive care and then telling of how she isn’t treated with respect by emergency room personnel. She questioned why she should seek more frequent, preventive care when her occasional experiences in the ER are so insulting.

The lack of cultural competency and respectfulness has far-reaching implications for health and costs. One discussion centered on the overuse of emergency rooms, and it emerged from that some people from this culture preferred the emergency room because of the anonymity it provides. Doctors in the clinics do not look like them or understand their culture, so they are reluctant to share this most personal aspect of their lives. Seeking care through the emergency room preserves privacy because there is no ongoing relationship with that care provider.

These hurdles create disconnection with providers, further hampering their ability to assume co-creation and co-management of health.

.....
“Homelessness is part of my health right now.”
– *St. Stephens Homeless Against Homelessness*

“My faith in you in as a doctor ... confidence.
I need to have confidence in you.”
– *St. Paul participant*

“We need to promote opportunities for
persons of color to enter more health care
professions; these are the populations
that have the greatest disparity.”
– *Worthington participant*
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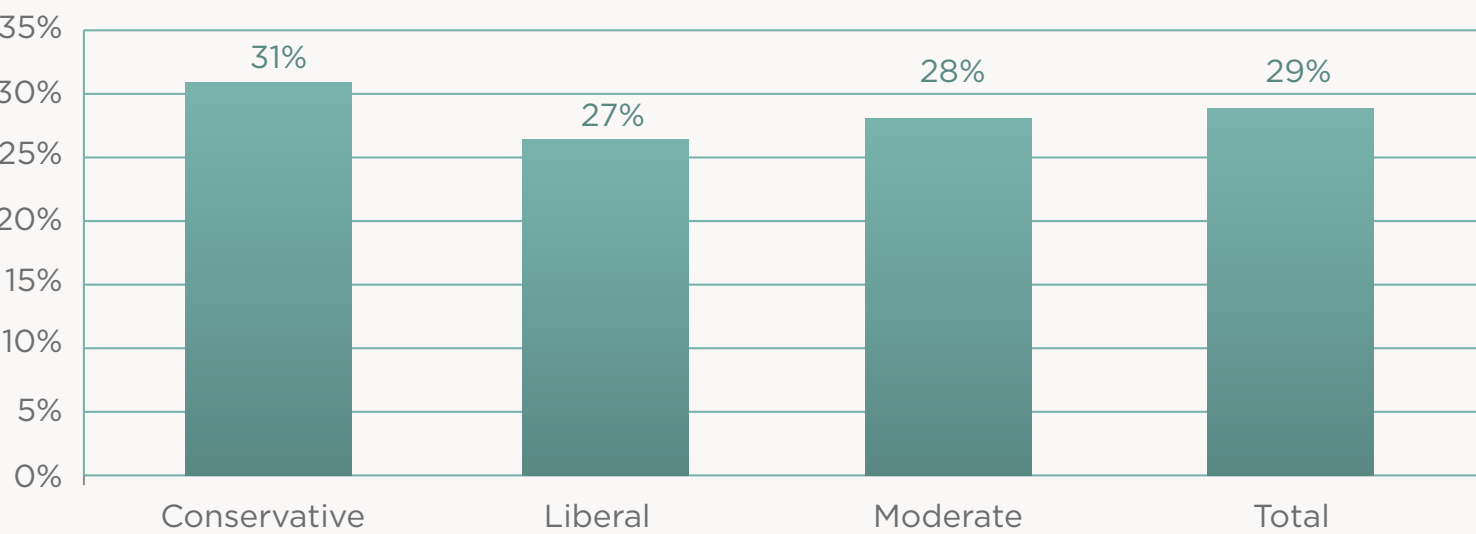
PRINCIPLE FOR ACTION:

Equip Minnesotans for Healthy Choices within the Health System

Citizen Solutions participants want to live healthier lives, but they need the tools and opportunities to make health care and the healthy choices more accessible and affordable in their interactions with the health care system. Citizen Solutions participants don’t want unfettered access to care, but they do believe that cost presents the greatest barrier to health within the health care system.

“As costs go up, I’ve had to increase the deductible for our employees and now I’m concerned they won’t use the insurance.”
– *Worthington participant*

AFFORDABILITY IS IDENTIFIED AS BIGGEST CHALLENGE AMONG 10 OPTIONS ACROSS ALL POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES



Participants were provided a list of ten challenges in health. They were asked to identify the top two challenges for health care in Minnesota.

LACK OF AFFORDABILITY IS SEEN AS THE BIGGEST HEALTH CARE CHALLENGE

When directly asked “What do you think is the biggest challenge for health care in Minnesota today?” Citizen Solutions participants identified a “lack of affordability” as the greatest challenge. This perspective held true across political persuasions, with conservative, moderate and liberal participants selecting a “lack of affordability” as the most pressing health care issue facing citizens.

“A lot of Minnesotans avoid getting health care help for themselves or their children when they need it because it’s so expensive or because their family budgets are too tight and they cannot afford to pay the out-of-pocket expenses.”
– *Duluth participant*



CITIZENS HAVE PRIORITIES ON HOW TO INCREASE AFFORDABILITY

Citizen Solutions participants were largely aligned in their suggested priorities for addressing the high costs that often bar access to quality health care. For these Minnesotans, the areas for reducing health care costs (in priority order) are:

Administrative Costs. Slightly more than half of Citizen Solutions participants identified this as the top cost-saving measure.

Preventable Conditions. These citizens believe that individuals are responsible for making smart diet and exercise choices, but the health care system also has a critical role to play in supporting preventative care and encouraging wellness visits.

Uncoordinated Care. Nearly half of all participants also identified coordination as an essential strategy to reduce health care costs and improve the overall health care experience.

COST CONCERNS DON'T TRANSLATE INTO EXPECTATIONS FOR UNFETTERED ACCESS

While cost was identified as the most significant challenge in the health care system, participants don't mean unfettered access to care. When asked about rights and responsibilities, less than one percent of all attendees suggested that unfettered access to health care should be part of a citizen's health rights.

PRINCIPLE FOR ACTION:

Align Systems and Environments to Encourage Health

Citizen Solutions participants believe that health is currently not a priority of society, and the entrenched nature of many institutions and environments can make pursuing and living a healthy lifestyle difficult. They also believe that health is often too narrowly defined. For Minnesotans participating in Citizen Solutions, good health is more than “not getting sick;” it’s also emotional and spiritual wellness and a balance in one’s life.

SHARE IN THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR A HEALTHIER MINNESOTA

Citizen Solutions participants across the state had a clear overall message: Minnesotans see the need for healthy choices, and they want their employers, institutions and communities to help make those healthy choices more often the default.

Unfortunately, that’s not how Citizen Solutions participants see our culture of health today. Healthy salads often cost more than twice what fast-food hamburgers cost. Access to healthy foods and opportunities to stay physically active are often limited. And with jam-packed lives, long hours at work, parental responsibilities and more, families often feel too mentally and financially exhausted to make the healthy diet and exercise choices they know they should.

Yet, when asked “what do you think is the most effective way of creating ... the changes we discussed today?” one-third of Citizen Solutions attendees said efforts should focus on making Minnesotans more knowledgeable health consumers, and one-fourth of attendees suggested focusing on community-based efforts to make healthy choices easier.

“ As a physician in residency I find it frustrating that I get paid for making diagnosis of disease but not for preventing disease in the first place. We have no way to pay medical providers to keep people healthy – only diagnosis and treatment. ”

- St. Paul participant

“ I don’t think the private sector does as much as it can to support health. ”

- Worthington participant



MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES EASIER AND MORE ACCESSIBLE

Citizen Solutions participants would like to see health and healthy lifestyles more readily incorporated into daily life. They offered multiple ideas to help make healthy choices easier, including:

Make Activity Accessible. Environments that support physical activity—parks, bike paths, gym memberships and employer-encouraged walking meetings—need to be accessible to help people become more active.

Incentivise Wise Food Choices. Some pointed to the high costs of fresh fruits and vegetables or limited access to them as an existing barrier, while others pointed to the affordability and accessibility of unhealthy foods like sodas and fast food. But all agreed that encouraging wise food choices will begin with making healthy foods affordable, accessible and appealing where citizens live and work.

Walk the Walk for Youth. Youth participants felt that encouragement of healthy behaviors only receives lip service. In particular, they expressed frustration with decreased availability of health

classes and the promotion of unhealthy choices through advertising. They felt these factors directly contradict and often undermine the health messages they receive from parents, teachers and other leaders.

“I’ve always felt that society and media have been tugging me in different directions with endorsement of unhealthy things alongside with the push to be healthy (or at least their idea of “healthy”). It’s those lessons that are imprinted on us that we’re most likely to pass on to future generations.”

– *teen online participant*

Help Citizens Experience the True Costs of Behaviors. Citizen Solutions participants voiced frustration with the high cost of healthy foods and the low cost of processed and unhealthy food choices. These citizens voiced support for the implementation or increase of taxes on sodas, tobacco and other unhealthy choices that contribute to preventable diseases, in order to help people better account for the full cost of these choices.

CONCLUSIONS

THROUGHOUT THE CITIZEN SOLUTIONS PROCESS—IN THE MEETINGS HELD ACROSS MINNESOTA,
IN ONLINE DISCUSSIONS THAT ENGAGED THOUSANDS OF CITIZENS, AND IN YOUTH-CENTERED
CONVERSATIONS—PARTICIPANTS MADE ONE CONSISTENT AND CLEAR POINT:

**Minnesotans want to assume a
greater role in supporting health.
They understand the health care system
alone does not define good health.**



But they expect:

Empowerment to Assume a Greater Role in Health.

Taking responsibility for health care is an important task, and citizens deserve full, clear and consistent information and education to enable them to take on this role and do it well.

An Affordable Health Care System. The current system is too costly and cumbersome, often making accessing healthcare difficult or unattainable.

Environments that Support Healthy Choices. Participants are looking to their employers, their families, their communities and state decision-makers to support them in assuming ownership of their health. Changes in these systems and environments would make healthy choices easier, and thereby help ensure a healthier Minnesota.

